

**TESTIMONY OF
KATHLEEN SILARD
SUBMITTED TO THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 10, 2022**

SB 284, An Act Increasing The Age From Eight To Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person To Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless Of Immigration Status

Stamford Health appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony in support of **SB 284, An Act Increasing The Age From Eight To Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person To Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless Of Immigration Status.**

Stamford Health is a comprehensive, independent, non-profit system serving lower Fairfield and Westchester counties. We employ more than 3,700 people, making us the largest employer in the city of Stamford and one of the largest in Fairfield County. Beyond the lifesaving care we provide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we contribute more than \$1 billion to our state and local economy and provide more than \$90 million in uncompensated care to the residents that need it most. We are committed to providing friendly, personal care coupled with the most sophisticated services to residents.

Senate Bill 284 would build on a 2021 Act which created, within available appropriations and for income-eligible individuals, a state-funded Medicaid program for children under age 9 and women for 12 months after giving birth. It required DSS to amend the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) state plan to provide insurance coverage for prenatal care through the "unborn child option." This program begins January 2023. Under SB 284, care would expand coverage under the state-funded Medicaid program to those under age 19. **Stamford Health urges the Committee to support SB 284.**

Stamford Health has long been integrated with its community partners, many of which provide critical services to immigrants regardless of their immigration status. In January 2020, we partnered with these organizations to ensure that immigrants in particular felt safe coming to a healthcare facility to get a vaccine. In collaboration with our community partners, we created the No Barriers program to promote vaccines early in socially vulnerable populations. Residents did not have to pre-register through the internet or by phone. They did not need an insurance card and, if they did not want to share their name, that was okay too. We spread the word through organizations, flyers and text messages in multiple languages. Over 3,500 individuals

received vaccines through this program January through May 2020. SB 284 would help foster the connection these populations have had during the pandemic to the healthcare system. As has been made clear over the pandemic, the health of each of us can impact the health of all of us. This extends to health issues beyond COVID-19.

Stamford Health's triennial Community Needs Health Assessment (CHNA) conducts extensive quantitative and qualitative assessments of our service area's most pressing needs. Access to health even prior to the pandemic, ranks consistently among the highest needs. **SB 284 will go a long way to helping those in need have access to care and we urge the Committee to favorably report it.**

Thank you for considering our views. We would be pleased to answer any questions.